

News Release

U of M Crookston Honors Individuals for Outstanding Contributions during Torch & Shield Recognition Slated for Tues., Oct. 23, 2007

By Corby Kemmer, Elizabeth Tollefson on Tuesday, October 9, 2007

CROOKSTON, Minn. (October 9, 2007) – Recognition will be paid to five individuals for their outstanding contributions to the University of Minnesota Crookston with the awarding of the University's highest honor – the Torch & Shield Award – on Tuesday, October 23, 2007. This year's recipients are Cindy Bigger; Jon Evert; Robert Jones, Ph.D.; Ardell Knudsvig; and Senator Keith Langseth. Through their exceptional leadership these honorees have aided in the development of the Crookston campus, University of Minnesota Extension and the Northwest Research and Outreach Center. Donors will also be recognized in along with the Torch and Shield recipients in the Bede Ballroom of the Student Center at the U of M Crookston.

This year's Torch & Shield recipients are:

Cindy Bigger, a 1979 graduate of the U of M Crookston, is a Regional Extension Educator and an associate professor for University of Minnesota Extension. The focus of her work is in leadership and civic engagement. During her 26-year career she has served in three Minnesota counties working primarily in 4-H youth development and leadership education. She also has a consulting business, Bigger Associates. For the past two years, Bigger has been a member of the U of M, Crookston Alumni Association board and currently serves as its vice president. She was the 2006 commencement speaker, a longtime donor, as well as serving on search committees and in many other volunteer capacities. Her father, Sam Bigger, received the Torch & Shield award in 1981.

Jon Evert serves as a coordinator of Rural Life Outreach of Northwest Minnesota and as a Clay County Commissioner. For several years, he has been a member of the All Campus Advisory Council at the U of M, Crookston. Evert has been a member of the Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership since its beginning in 1988 and served as chairman for six years. He service has included the Statewide Coordinating Committee which he currently chairs. As a six-year member of the Citizens Advisory Committee for the University of Minnesota Extension, Evert is the immediate past-chair. He is an avid supporter of the Crookston campus and promoted it across northwest Minnesota and the state.

Robert Jones, Ph.D., works closely with the U of M Crookston as the senior vice president for system academic administration. In his role as senior vice president, Jones has day-to-day management responsibility for the coordinate campuses at Crookston, Duluth, Morris and Rochester. He began his career at the University of Minnesota as a professor of agronomy and plant genetics. For the past 19 years, he has held administrative positions. His current leadership role has given him responsibilities that include, but are not limited to, public engagement and outreach; international programs; PreK-12 and other youth and family programs; urban initiatives; equity and diversity; legislative relations; and the Extension Service's and Agricultural Research and Outreach Centers' research and service programs throughout the state. He has been a visiting professor and featured speaker in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa, and served as an academic and scientific consultant for Archbishop Tutu's South African Education Program.

Ardell Knudsvig is the director of the Student Outreach Project for Applied Science and Technology at the U of M, Crookston and a crop health specialist for the northwest district of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Knudsvig was a science teacher at Crookston High School from 1976 until his retirement in 1998. He was named Crookston Teacher of the Year three times and believed in challenging students through encouragement, commitment and working together, something he still adheres to in his current role where he coordinates U of M Crookston faculty and students to assist in teaching of high school students in areas of science and technology.

Senator Keith Langseth is currently one of the longest-serving senators in the Minnesota Legislature. Over the years, Senator Langseth has chaired many committees and authored many pieces of legislation in support of education. He believes strongly in investing in the future of our state. Senator Langseth currently serves as the chairperson of the Senate's Capital Investment Committee, which is responsible for putting together the major bonding bill in odd-numbered years which funds Minnesota's infrastructure. This biennial bill funds millions of dollars for the University to build and renovate facilities statewide. In 2007, Senator Langseth was named Legislator of the Year by Politics in Minnesota. Senator Langseth, who is unable to be present at the Torch & Shield recognition event, was presented his award during a special presentation during homecoming in early October.

A social and program in Bede Ballroom begin the evening followed by a banquet in Brown Dining Room. There have been 205 community leaders recognized since 1966 when the Torch and Shield Recognition was initiated by U of M, Crookston Founding Provost, Stanley Sahlstrom. To view all past Torch and Shield Recipients, visit U of M Crookston website.

The University of Minnesota Crookston (UMC) delivers more than 25 applied-science undergraduate degree programs and 50 concentrations, including online degrees, in agriculture; arts, humanities and social sciences; business; math, science and technology; and natural resources. Invent yourself at the University of Minnesota Crookston – become a leader, innovate through technology and research and secure the career you want. To learn more, visit www.UMCrookston.edu.

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2900 University Ave., Crookston, MN 56716
800-862-6466 | 218-281-6510 | umcinfo@umn.edu

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